

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

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MYSELF**

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The Soul of New Orleans

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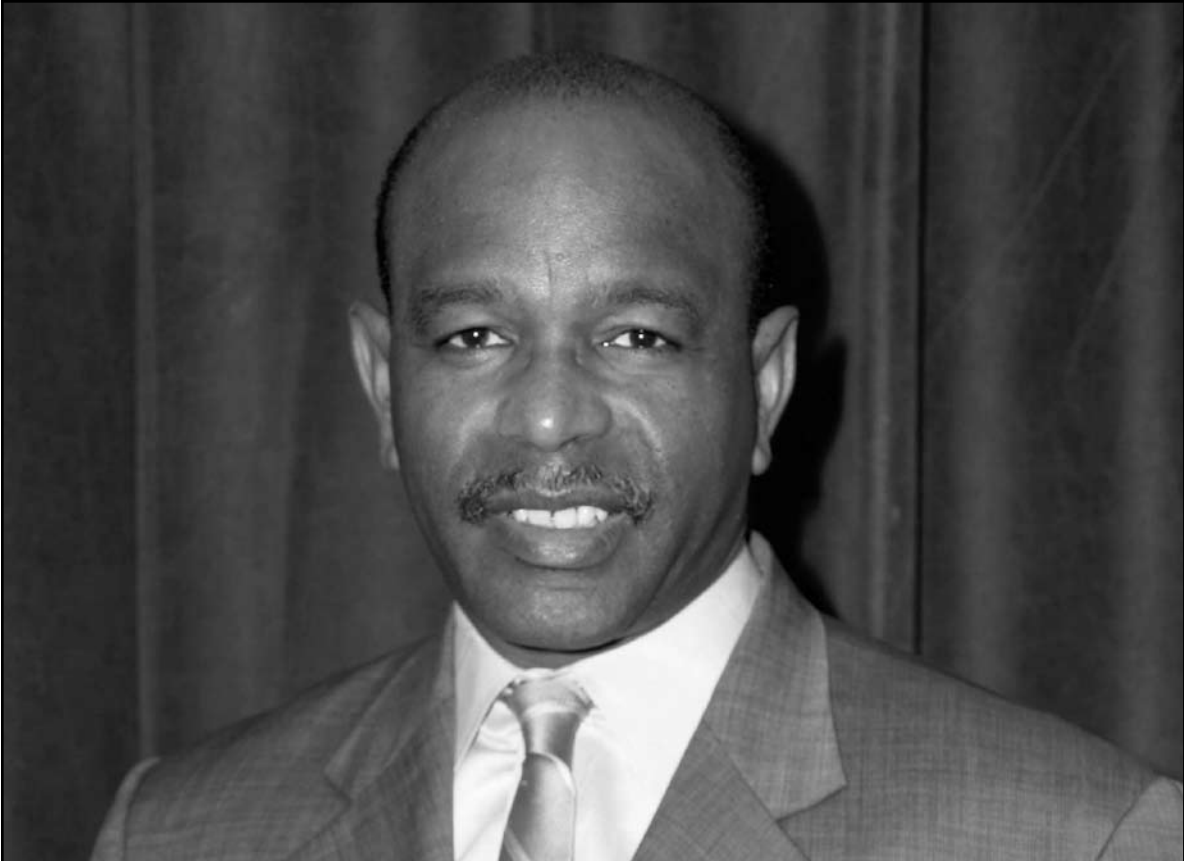
Data News Exclusive:
New Orleans District Attorney Eddie Jordan Speaks Out

By Edwin Buggage
Photos by Glenn Summers

As the roar of the people reaches a fever pitch in the Crescent City concerning the recent crime wave in New Orleans many of the city's law enforcement's top brass specifically Police Superintendent Warren Riley and Orleans Parish District Attorney Eddie Jordan find themselves in the crosshairs of firestorm of criticism about a criminal justice system that citizens feel are not keeping criminals off the streets. A recent agreement between these two agencies which includes a ten-point plan to help cut through much of the bureaucratic wrangling that has impeded these two agencies from working more effectively together in the past hopes to quell the furor over what citizens are calling an inadequate and inefficient criminal justice system in the city New Orleans.

D.A. Jordan speaks of how this monumental agreement came about, "Our agreement came about over several months, and actually we've had discussions with the previous administration prior to the storm." Talking about one of the plans he says, "One of these solutions like expedited screening that's something that predates the storm by several years, but we were not able to come up with a comprehensive set of solutions to our problems until the last several months." "Myself and Chief Riley have agreed to work together to try to deal with a problem that far predates any of our tenures in office; these problems are decades old and are systematic but we are determined to work together to try to remedy some of the problems so citizens can feel safe and know that if someone commits a crime they will be prosecuted to the full extent the law allows."

Having received much criticism of a seemingly revolving door of justice where the intersection of Tulane and South Broad Avenues where the courts and prison are housed there's the perception by many concerned New Orleanians that it functions



more like a hotel for lawbreakers where predators continue to prey on the citizens of the city and arresting a suspect doesn't always equal a conviction. Jordan says his office has done a much better in this area than his predecessor, "My conviction rate is higher; in Mr. Connick last year which was 2002 he had a 36% conviction rate in jury trials while in 2005 we had a percentage of 52.4% and for judge trials he had a conviction rate of 47.8% and in 2005 we had a conviction rate of 61.8% percent also in that same period we accepted 70% of cases where he accepted 54%." Speaking of the loss of much of his staff since the storm; he lauds the performance of his office given their lack of resources, "Since Hurricane Katrina we have lost 40% of our attorneys, but many of those retained are more experienced prosecutors, so given our present situation with less

at our disposal we are still doing a better job than my predecessor."

As the year began with several high profile murders causing outrage among the citizenry, people from all corners of the Crescent City took siege upon the steps of city hall voicing their outrage about the escalation of crime in the city. D.A. Jordan sympathizes with the citizens and understands their frustration. "I think people are understandably upset about the crime problem. Crime is the number one problem for citizens of New Orleans; we all hate the crime, and want to do more about it." A mission he and Police Superintendent Riley are determined to accomplish according to D.A. Jordan, "Chief Riley and I were meeting before the march, so I think we both fully understand the magnitude of the

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COVER STORY

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problem.” He sympathizes with those whose lives have been affected by crime and violence, “I understand how much suffering this has caused and the fear that it has generated in the citizens, and since I’ve been in office it has been my goal to do everything I can to make my office more effective in fighting crime.”

As to why some crimes go unsolved may have its roots in the historically adversarial relationship between law enforcement and the African-American community have stopped many from stepping forward for fear of retaliation and/or what they deem as a lackluster performance by law enforcement to keep criminals locked up. D.A. Eddie Jordan feels that a better relationship between the citizens and law enforcement is essential so that can become more involved in solving crimes that take place in their communities. “I think citizens should

immediately, but it will be much more visible within the next sixty days. The menace of drugs and the cases related to them are an overwhelming majority of the cases that come across his desk; a percentage he cites at sixty percent a fact that is troubling to Jordan. He feels more involvement to prevent young people from becoming involved with drugs and crime is as necessary as locking away criminals. “I think it’s our responsibility to get more of our young people involved in activities that have more positive outcomes, and it’s the responsibility of the whole community to make sure our young people are involved in positive activities.” Speaking of some of the preventive programs his office had in place before their funding was discontinued, “We had in place a diversion program, that helped first time offenders, and prior to the storm we partnered with several schools which were one of the

“Myself and Chief Riley have agreed to work together to try to deal with a problem that far predates any of our tenures in office”

be more vigilant in reporting crime, identifying those who commit crimes, and hopefully they will have the level of confidence in the police department that they would call them when they see a crime taking place, and they would cooperate with the police.” And as to the question of his office doing a better job prosecuting suspects once their arrested he says, “I think for us to do a better job at prosecuting criminals relations between the community and the police must improve so more people will step up and work with us to help in solving crimes.” “But that is just the first step, it is not sufficient just to identify a criminal, but citizens must be willing to take it to the next level, and actually testify in court against people who commit these violent crimes.”

He says of his office’s recent agreement with the Police Department that citizens should expect results almost

positive things we were doing, but we lost our funding for the outreach program.” “We also had a summer program where we would have kids come into our office for several weeks and we would give them information about staying away from drugs and teach them about the criminal justice system, and we would expose them to positive job experiences, employment opportunities and stress the importance of education.”

With this agreement D.A. Eddie Jordan Office and N.O.P.D. he feels citizens should be encouraged by this intuitive, “The people of New Orleans should be very encouraged by this new agreement.” Dispelling the myths he said are perpetuated and disseminated by the mainstream media that speculates a less than amicable relationship between the agencies, he says, “We have always attempted to work together, but there were institutional roadblocks where we

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NEWSMAKER

HBCUs are Giving Back To New Orleans Despite the Lack of Media Coverage

By Avrey Brewton

New Orleans, LA— Since the beginning of the spring break season, thousands of students from across the globe have poured into the city to assist in the recovery and rebuilding efforts throughout the most ravaged neighborhoods in New Orleans. Many students just wanted to see the city and the progress that has been made in the last year and a half. Despite news coverage, many still do not know why and how this disaster occurred. In addition to gutting homes and cleaning up neighborhoods, students have come to check up on the people here and to spend money in the city. "I thought with all of the volunteers and help coming into this city, it would be back to normal in no time!" says, Jonathon Sellers, a Florida A& M Alumni who spent a week volunteering two weeks ago on his alternative spring break trip with his alma mater. "The stories that I have heard working side by side with the locals are incredible, and I will never forget." Seller says he left



Florida A&M, Wilberforce, and Morgan State are among the many colleges and universities enabling their students to come work in New Orleans.

Since the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the media has portrayed

you wouldn't know it by watching the news. News about residents coming home, finding jobs, and helping each other is beneficial to the morale of the city and race relations.

New Orleans native, Jabari

into neighborhoods such as the seventh and ninth ward to assist in gutting homes, clearing debris, tutoring in schools, and working on legal and medical teams. Some students also did community outreach talks about community

The Dean of Howard's Rankin Chapel, Bernard Richardson, spearheaded their alternative spring break initiative last year with 250 students. This year they were able to raise an impressive \$100,000 to send the students down to help. Jabari Smith, the only student trustee on Howard's Board of Trustees says, "Howard University is committed to service and civic engagement, and is challenging all historically black colleges and universities to give of their time and effort to the rebuilding of New Orleans!"

Smith gave tips to students who are trying to organize a volunteer initiative to New Orleans "Get your community involved, even those who can't go, can help in some other way. Devise a logistical plan. Habitat for Humanity, NAACP, and churches are excellent resources to use for lodging, food, community partners, and transportation provisions."

It is important for tomorrow's leaders to experience first hand the recovery efforts. Jonathan Sellers agrees, "I feel like I have a much better perspective on how



this city with a story of his own to share, a sense of accomplishment and commitment to the people of "The Big Easy."

This is a far cry from the wild and crazy escapades many college students engage in on a typical spring break vacation. Volunteer work is anything but nice. It can be dirty, dangerous, tedious, and sometimes thankless. However, it is needed. HBCU's and their students from around the country are joining the effort to keep New Orleans on the minds and hearts of this nation, especially the national Black community. HBCU's including Howard,

the African American populace of New Orleans as violent, destitute, dependent, and helpless. On the other hand, volunteers and supporters have been portrayed as mostly Caucasian, wholesome, dedicated, forgiving, and understanding. Locals say that all the support that has come into this city is much appreciated. However, there is much to be said about the lack of positive images in the media about Blacks. Residents of New Orleans have come together to help each other rebuild their homes, and Black organizations from around the country have come to lend a helping hand. But

Smith, a senior broadcast journalism student at Howard University, says that the influx of engaged college students are a positive reflection of the Black community and young people. This is why he has teamed up with the Washington Post and various media outlets to get the word out about their contributions to New Orleans.

Howard University has a lot to talk about, sponsoring a whopping 700 students to come to New Orleans with their sleeves rolled and ready to work. 500 undergraduates and 200 law students poured

organizing. The law students worked in clinics on cases dealing with prisoners' rights, building houses, and supporting class action lawsuits on behalf of public housing residents. By teaming up with dedicated organizations such as Common Ground, The People's Organizing Committee, Acorn and Habitat for Humanity, students were trying to ensure that they were helping where assistance was needed the most.

Like many universities around the country, Howard University accepted many Katrina evacuees and now has a New Orleans population of approximately 300.

politics, culture, and development can profoundly affect our communities." The two year anniversary of Katrina and the breached levees is approaching, and the city still has a long way to go. No one knows how long it's going to take to build a better and stronger New Orleans, but it is certain it will not be possible without the help of volunteers, and the media has to do a better job of making sure the public knows of their good works.

NATIONAL NEWS

Even After Imus Suspension, Sharpton and Others Say He Should Be Fired

Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Activist Al Sharpton joins civil rights leaders around the country in calling for radio and television talkshow host Don Imus to be fired for calling the Rutgers University women's basketball team, "nappy-headed hos". But, Sharpton, who has also spoken against gangsta rap lyrics that denigrate Black women says Blacks should also be held accountable for allowing it to happen.

Rutgers' coach C. Vivian Stringer, this week called the Imus comments, "racist and sexist remarks that are deplorable, despicable and unconscionable."

Says Sharpton, "I've called for his termination and announced that we're going to start picketing the station...This is blatant racism...The FCC [Federal Communications Commission] ought to take him off the air" and added that he was writing a letter requesting that the agency does just that. But, Sharpton says Black musicians and rappers should also



On the April 4 edition of MSNBC's Imus in the Morning, Imus referred to the Rutgers University women's basketball team, which is comprised of eight African-American and two white players, as "nappy-headed hos" immediately after the show's executive producer, Bernard McGuirk, called the team "hard-core hos."

be held accountable for degrading slurs of Black women.

"That's the reason why I thought someone like me could take this on because I've been critical of that," says Sharpton. "I took on the rappers on that...I said many people are not going to like me jumping on the gangsta rappers. I said then, we're going to give license to Whites to do this. Now that they do it, we don't like it."

Even as pickets and protests escalated and the Rutgers team has now spoken out, MSNBC has not fired, but suspended Imus for two weeks. Imus has also appeared on Sharpton's radio talk show repeatedly saying he is sorry for the offense, but the anger over the remarks continued to rise this week.

In a press conference this week, Rutgers coach C. Vivian Stringer said "These young ladies are the

best this nation has to offer and we are so very fortunate to have them at Rutgers University... They are young ladies of class, distinction. They are articulate. They are brilliant. They are gifted," Stringer adds, "They are God's representatives in every sense of the word."

Among the players who spoke out, sophomore Heather Zurich, said although the team did not win, they were joyful at having made the championship. "We were stripped of this moment by a degrading comment made by Mr. Imus," Zurich said.

On April 4 on his syndicated radio show "Imus in the Morning," which airs live on MSNBC, Imus referred to the Rutgers women's basketball team as "some nappy-headed 'hos'", which in gangsta rap lyrics is commonly used for the term whore.

Imus' slur came in response to his executive producer Bernard McGuirk, who called the team, which has eight African-American players, "some hard-core 'hos'."

McGuirk then took it a step further, describing the teams in which Tennessee defeated

Rutgers in the NCAA women's basketball championship, as "The Jigaboos verses the Wannabes", apparently a take from Spike Lee's movie, "Do the Right Thing."

Following a firestorm of criticism, Imus has apologized for the remark and MSNBC has distanced itself from the remark by issuing a disclaimer. But, Sharpton and others say none of that is good enough.

John Smith, publisher of the Atlanta Inquirer and chair of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, says he agrees with Sharpton that "part of it's our fault for allowing our people to say it."

But, Smith says, MSNBC must take greater responsibility for what's happened by releasing a statement denouncing the comment.

Smith says the "hos" comment by Imus is just indicative of a racist mentality among much of American media, which often treats Blacks with a double standard.

"Anna Nicole Smith, with all that she's done, they're praising

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Shaquanda Cotton Free, Yet The Movement is Just Beginning

By. Gordon Jackson
Special to the NNPA from the
Dallas Examiner

DALLAS (NNPA) - Four days after a spirited but peaceful rally, 15-year-old Shaquanda Cotton was freed from a Texas Youth Commission facility in Brownwood.

Although it ended her one-year sentence for allegedly shoving a hall monitor at her high school, it has not ended the controversy and momentum of what nationally renowned comedian Rickey Smiley calls steps toward a second civil rights movement.

"A fire cannot start without a spark," Smiley, the leader behind the rally, said. "You've all started a whole movement. This is not the end."

Two days after Cotton's release, she celebrated with Smiley on his Dallas morning radio show.

"I feel like I have a second chance," Cotton told The Chicago Tribune. "I think I'm a good person, but I'm going to be a better person."

Cotton later told The Dallas Examiner: "If it wasn't for our people making this public, I would still be there."

Cotton's release was made possible by a collaborative effort between State Representative Harold Dutton (D-Houston), Chair of the House Juvenile Justice Committee and Jay Kimbrough, the newly appointed TYC conservator, appointed by Governor Perry to investigate the scandal within the agency of several inmates being sexually and physically abused.

Cotton's sentencing was first reported by The Chicago Tribune on March 12 and rapidly spread among the African American internet blogging community. Upon learning of the story, Smiley used his radio show to campaign for her release.

Smiley's studio at KBFB 97.9 The Beat was packed with Cotton's friends, family and supporters as they spoke of what her story means to the status of African Americans and the judicial system. The unraveling



of details placed accountability and responsibility not only on Paris' alleged racially charged environment, but also on the strength of Black leadership.

Shaquanda's mother Creola, refuted several segments of previous reports, including whether Shaquanda even shoved the hall monitor. "She did not do what she's accused of doing. I don't care what they put in the newspaper," Creola said. Despite Shaquanda's blog (www.

freeshaquandacotton.blogspot.com) stating that she shoved a hall monitor, Creola and her daughter both claimed it was the other way around.

"They charged her with pushing a hall monitor. She didn't," Creola told The Dallas Examiner. "Shaquanda was the one that was injured. They didn't assist her with any medical needs or anything. They just let her sit there. She had a contusion on her forehead, a small laceration

on the palm of her hand and a strained neck. And we have the medical records to prove it. She was pushed into a metal door and that was when she hurt her head."

Shaquanda often received written reprimands on trivial matters Creola said regarding reports that she was constantly getting in trouble in school. "After they arrested her, they started writing her up five times a day," Ms. Cotton said. "Then when it was time for her trial, that was her criminal record, those write-ups."

She got written up once for raising her hand to tell the teacher she was cold, for pouring too much paint in a cup...for turning her head toward the window, she got write-ups."

Creola Cotton denied there was ever an offer of probation for Shaquanda that she reportedly refused, causing Judge Chuck Superville to sentence her.

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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

Local Legislators Respond to Blanco’s Withdrawal From Gubernatorial Race

By Edwin Buggage

It was a shock to many across the state as embattled Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco decided she would not seek reelection in the fall primary. Over the last several months she has been at the center of controversy and criticism regarding the slow pace of the Louisiana Road Home Program. Since its inception 115,000 residents have applied for aid, with only 3,000 receiving grants thus far. A dwindling approval rating and early polls showing her trailing Republican Bobby Jindal by as much as twenty percentage points may have also cause her to withdraw from the race.

Since the recovery effort began she has found herself at odds with many elected officials from New Orleans in what they feel has been poor judgment regarding the implementation of the much maligned Louisiana Road Home Program. One such critic is Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus Chair Cedric Richmond, a State Representative from New Orleans. While at times they have been adversaries he was moved by the selflessness of her decision not to run, “My first reaction was it really took a big person to do what she did, because she truly sacrificed her political career, and although I was not one of her supporters, its admirable she sacrificed her bid for reelection for the good of the citizens of Louisiana.”

While she has decided not to seek reelection questions remain about the Road Home Program and how her departure may affect it. Juan LaFonta, a State Representative from District 96 says it will have a minimal impact, “I don’t think it is going to have much of an impact because we were looking for solutions prior to her decision not to run, and a lot of stuff we accomplished were not necessarily with her blessing or support.” “I think the solutions to our problems are bigger than one person.” According to LaFonta reactions in Baton Rouge were mixed, “Some of us thought it would happen so her decision wasn’t a surprise, but those who held her up and supported her throughout this process are concerned about their political futures.”

Partisan politics also may played a part in creating a public case for the Governor’s undoing according to Rep. Richmond, “The Republican Party have throughout the recovery process seen this as an opportunity for political gain; they clearly have shown a lack of compassion for people in the affected areas of Louisiana, they have blocked pay raises for state workers, corrections officers, support workers, teachers, our firefighters and police and that’s just wrong.” He goes on implying this may be a case of political subterfuge by Republicans at the state level where blocking legislation was part of an agenda to further the cause of their candidate Bobby Jindal. “Much of what they’re doing is only because they could and it would make Governor Blanco look bad, so it could help their candidate Bobby Jindal.” According to Rep. Richmond he feels many Republican legislators blocked the governor’s initiatives with the sole intention of using it as ammunition in the fall election. But he feels that now she is out of the race that many of the initiatives they fought against may now pass, something Richmond thinks is a sad commentary that politicians would put party affiliation before people. “Now that Governor Blanco is not running you may see the Republicans fall right in line to do some of these things now that she is not seeking reelection.” The Gubernatorial primary is scheduled for October 20th 2007.

Road Home Applicants will Receive Lump Sum Payment Following Closing

New Policy to Take Effect on Wednesday

BATON ROUGE, La. (April 9, 2007) - Road Home applicants who have mortgages on their properties will receive a lump sum payment for the full amount of their Road Home grant via electronic transfer in the days following their closing, rather than receiving it in disbursements as repairs are made to their homes, under a policy change announced today by officials from the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) and the state’s Division of Administration’s Office of Community Development (OCD).

The LRA advised that homeowners with mortgages will need to work with their lenders to meet their legal obligations and get additional loans along with their Road Home grant in case they need added resources for their repairs.

“By providing lump sum payments, homeowners will get their full grant amount with no arrearages deducted by the Road Home program,” said LRA Housing Task Force Chairman Walter Leger. “Nonetheless, we strongly urge homeowners to work with their lenders to meet their obligations and to get all the resources they need to rebuild. In some cases, this may mean additional borrowing. In addition, we believe that establishing a voluntary disbursement account with their lender would be a good way for homeowners to guard against creditors and fraudulent contractors.”

In order to accommodate the new policy, the three- year occupancy requirement will be replaced with a revised covenant requiring homeowners to occupy the home at some point during the three-year period after closing. Also under the program’s new guidelines, there will be no subordination of the covenant by lenders before closing

Avoiding Unscrupulous Contractors

Because the original policy also helped protect homeowners from unscrupulous contractors seeking large, upfront payments, state officials recommend homeowners consult with financial advisors, lenders and housing counselors before beginning repairs.

“To date we have received more than 2,100 contractor fraud complaints. As more people are able to make repairs and more people have money to spend, the unfortunate side effect could be more unscrupulous people trying to take advantage of them,” said Louisiana Attorney General Charles C. Foti, Jr. “We will do everything in our power to help educate the public about contractor fraud and to protect homeowners. Citizens need to report any instance of suspect activity to the Attorney General’s office or the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors.”

Timeline for New Policy

Officials at the OCD said beginning April 11, 2007 Road Home applicants who have mortgages on their properties will receive a lump sum payment for the full amount of their Road Home grant via electronic transfer in the days following their closing. State officials are discussing with lenders ways for the policy to be applied to homeowners with mortgages that have already closed on their awards.

The policy change follows a similar announcement two weeks ago for homeowners without mortgages. Starting April 2, 2007, the Road Home program began issuing lump-sum awards directly to homeowners without mortgages.

Rev. Jackson encourages mass participation in April 28th march to Ninth Ward in New Orleans



Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, reaffirmed his commitment for an April 28 march and rally leading people into New Orleans’ devastated 9th Ward.

Just days after closing a successful Right to Return and Reconstruction Summit in New Orleans earlier this week, Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, reaffirmed his commitment for an April 28 march and rally leading people into New Orleans’ devastated 9th Ward.

Rev. Jackson made the announcement in Chicago during the weekly, internationally-televised broadcast Saturday Morning Forum at Rainbow PUSH headquarters. He encouraged attendance at the march, which will highlight that more than 18 months after Hurricane Katrina tore through the city destroying levees, there are still more than 250,000 people living in exile as federal dollars are funneled to Baton Rouge but have yet to make it to New Orleans.

“The Louisiana legislature looks upon New Orleans with a certain amount of contempt, treating people as if they’re not citizens. We have to get back there and engage in mass action,” Rev. Jackson said.

During the broadcast, Rev. Jackson also spoke to the need for the federal government to assist the millions of families who will be left homeless and penniless on the heels of the sub-prime lending crisis. He discussed Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich’s gross receipts tax plan and its potentially devastating effect on small businesses, and also welcomed home the 120 high school students who returned Saturday from an 8-day tour of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Shaquanda Cotton,
Continued from page 5.

"That is not true and we have the documents to prove it," she said, stating that her daughter was never offered probation and did nothing to deserve a year's sentence. "Shaquanda has maintained her innocence through everything," Creola said.

So how does a lawyer allow a 13-year-old to be sentenced to an indefinite term of incarceration for something that generally is resolved by alternative education or in school suspension? Shaquanda said she and her mother met her attorney five minutes before her hearing.

"I don't think he did a good job. I think we could have gotten better assistance," she said.

Creola also countered her being labeled an irresponsible parent by a spokesperson for Judge Superville and District Attorney Gary Young.

"What they mean by being irresponsible is because I challenged any of the write-ups the school had. I felt I was doing what a good parent would do if their children are having a problem in school, you go see what it is," Creola said. "They have a procedure that you follow where you fill out paperwork just to see the superintendent. This is why they're saying I'm an unfit mother, because I filed complaints.

"I have no history of drinking or drugs or any kind of abuse. It's because I filed so many complaints against the school and the police department that [they felt] Shaquanda didn't need to be in my care because [they said] I was teaching her hate and not adhering to White authority."

Brenda Cherry, a family friend and president of Concerned Citizens for Racial Equality, said the same thing is happening to other African American students, with prospects of it taking place even more.

"It's worse now rather than better. They're angry because Shaquanda was released," Cherry said. What they did to Shaquanda Cotton, I think it's just another form of a public lynching. They used her write-ups as criminal record. They're using one-sided evidence; at least they did with Shaquanda.

"There is a lot of retaliation in Paris. If you speak out, you will get retaliated against, one way or another, even by the police department or by the school district," she continued.

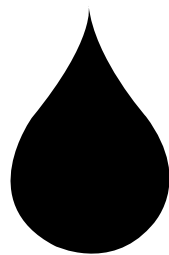
"Now, what you're saying is, by them being angry because Shaquanda was released, they're going to retaliate against the other Black students?" Smiley asked.

"Another student may be put on OCS (On-Campus Suspension) because he attended the march and was quoted in the Paris News," Cherry responded.

Shaquanda described her year in the Ron Jackson Correctional facility.

"I didn't like it there. I had to take a lot of stuff from the girls," she said. "They pushed me and bumped into me. I just had to sit there and deal with it. Some of the guards tried to help me out, but others didn't care and they would write me up for stuff I wasn't doing.

Despite her difficult situation Shaquanda was determined to stay strong, "I said (to myself) that my family's depending on me."



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DATA ZONE

Messiah of Hip-Hop... Who Is MYSELF?

As the hip-hop music

sound landscape once resembled an innovative creative oasis with endless possibilities; where sound collages were the sonic equivalent of the great works of renown visual artist Romare Bearden in the past decade has been transformed into a staid industry staple where many of the major record labels put out music draped in depravity, bravado, pseudo macho thug posturing, gross materialism, hedonism and misogyny seems the de rigueur. Conversely, artists who have something truly important to say have been left by the wayside; in many instances it seems the business side of the music has done a drive-by shooting of sorts sapping away much of the creativity leaving the genre represented by those whose material leave much to be desired.

Hip-hop music is at a crossroads trying to re-discover itself. And one such artist has been through many incarnations in his hip-hop career but his chosen moniker of the moment is simply MYSELF, armed with an international distribution deal through Caroline/EMI affiliate Raptivism is poised to bring back a sense of meaning to the music. Born Marlon Ned he honed his talent in the Big Easy making a name for himself in the 1990's in the underground hip-hop scene as a member of the Fugitives, soon conquering the New Orleans music scene with his show stopping stage performances he sought out greater opportunities to showcase his talent, so he packed up transporting himself to where hip-hop began, to the rough and tumble, hustling, bustling Big Apple. He says his ascendance to having his music distributed through a major label has not been an overnight thing, but a gradual climb. "What people don't know is that I'm not a new artist, I've put out several projects independently, and throughout those times I have grown not just as an emcee, but as a singer/songwriter and I also produced this whole project with my DJ Moosaka." He says of his music, "I see MYSELF as a chameleon that changes with my environment, but not somebody who changes with trends, I've always been one to go against the grain, and do things that's not considered mainstream."

Having shared the stage with many artists include: New Orleans music legend Dr. John, Wynton Marsalis, Rebirth Brass Band, the Roots, and Grammy Award winning blues musician Chris Thomas King, MYSELF became immersed in the world of many different styles of music infusing them with hip-hop and inspiring him to expand his musical palette. His music has broadened as he has matured into an artist that music is boundless. But he is distressed by what he sees happening in the world of contemporary hip-hop, which he feels lacks a sense of consciousness, and purpose. "I feel much of the commercial hip-hop is more detrimental than progressive, but I am aware that there has always been a side of hip-hop that has showcased the more commercial side, but what my concern is that



it is the only side that is being marketed and distributed for the mass consumption." Talking about how much of the industry has taken an assembly line approach to promoting music he says, "I can remember when records were broken regionally, but now on commercial radio whether you're in, New York, New Orleans, Houston or any other city you hear the same twenty records, that I feel has taken much of the beauty and creativity away from the music."

Continued on page 16.

DATA ZONE

Data Around Town

Photos by: Ruben DeTiege



NAMC and NOMBA members arrive to network at the April Business After Dark Event, held at Pellerin's 3717 Tulane Avenue in New Orleans.



Judy Goodman of Judy Goodman & Company showcases her vocal talent.



Judy Goodman & Company provided entertainment for the Business After Dark Event.



Myron O. Lee, Sr. Executive Director of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAAC) address the crowd at the Business After Dark First Friday Event in association with the New Orleans Black MBA Association



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5pm - 7pm
\$2 grey goose
martini
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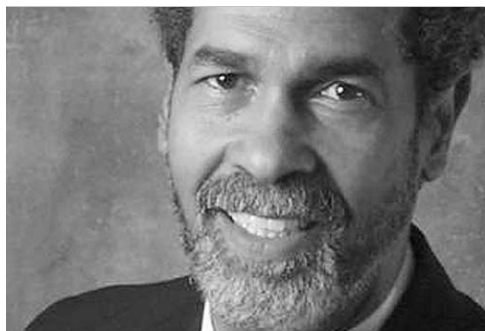
live
entertainment
in april
wednesdays
noche latina
7pm - 10pm

thursdays
old school
party
7pm - 10pm
fridays
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OPINION

“Between The Lines” is Now on NOLA.TV (The cooperation of Free Black Men)



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

One of the things that has hampered our new Louisiana Diaspora's ability to address “return home” or compensation issues is our lack of communications. We own no television or radio networks, so even when we get “air time” it is local, whether we be in Atlanta, New Orleans, Houston, Memphis, Dallas, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Houma. This situation means that we all feel isolated and struggling as individuals against a large system that is insensitive and too slow in addressing our needs.

Paul Beaulieu and I have talked to so many people who upon visiting in their own home town have confessed how much they miss being able to tune into our “Between The Lines” cable access TV show. We've been troubled that so many past viewers, even those who are in New Orleans but using satellite TV, are cut off from the information and perspectives we share every week. You can cry and complain about a situation or you can get creative and busy and find or create another way.

Lawrence Martin is a product of the “lower nine”, along with myself, as well as Terry Jones, the publisher of DATA. We all grew up around one another, went to St. David's elementary together and now find ourselves all involved in communications and media. All that adds up to something, and what it adds up to today is that I can get the word out in this column about a web site that can get Paul and my “Between The Lines” show out beyond cable TV and the city limits.

You, also, have a part in all this. Each person who now knows from reading this in DATA is part of the plan and the process getting the word out about New Orleans people being able to watch “Between The Lines” and other “TV” news that is based on our needs and perspectives.

www.nola.tv is Lawrence Martin's web site where you can see Paul and me on a “Between The Lines” show anytime (24/7). Just go to NOLATV and click on the photo of me and Paul and the show will start immediately. While you are there you can also view a story on DA Eddie Jordan that you ought to view

before you judge him based on media that we don't own, and that tends to attempt to discredit black men in public service.

Vincent Sylvain has been a leader in the use of email technology to keep the new Diaspora informed on an almost daily basis, but there is nothing like sound and video to engage and inspire people to action, and action is what we need, right now, and by everyone affected. Its time for people to realize that we must cooperate and work with one another and use what we have to get what we need even though for some of you all you have may be you, but “you” can be a powerful tool if you spread the word when ever you get one.

Yes, you may not have a newsletter, newspaper, TV show or web site, but you have ways to communicate to a circle of friends and relatives, old neighbors and co-workers, new friends and allies, and that makes you an essential part of the solution to our communication limits. Please tell, call, email or write everyone you know who has an interest in New Orleans and encourage them to please check out NOLA.TV, and Paul and myself on “Between The Lines”, now an online TV show.

I can't help but recognize that the four black men involved in making “Between The Lines” available to anyone anywhere in the world are all independent business people. Terry Jones of DATA enabled me to become the “Love Doctor”, a courageous move considering people knew me as “only a photographer” (read free black man). Then Paul and I cooperated on “Between the Lines”, even though we don't agree all the time. Then two producers of video, myself and Lawrence Martin choose to see one another as collaborators rather than as competitors. The end result of all this unheard of cooperation is that you get a chance to do your part and spread the word that we can and do make things happen when we cooperate and find common cause.

It is time for all of us, “to light a candle rather than curse the darkness”, a time to use what we have to get what we want and a time for you to see yourself as a tool in the hand of God, and do your thing, even if right now all you can do is spread the word about the show being on NOLA.TV and that it happened based on the cooperation of free black men.

Now any place in the world you go you can see and hear Paul and me speaking our minds about what's going on in New Orleans from a black perspective. We did our part... now you do yours!

Basketball Players are not ‘Nappy-headed Ho’s’



George C. Curry
NNPA

Every time you think radio broadcaster Don Imus and one of his long-time sidekicks, Sid Rosenberg, have sunk as low as possible, they find yet another way to dish even more slime. Imus' latest offense involves referring to Black women on the Rutgers basketball team as “nappy-headed ho's.” The team, which has eight African-Americans and two Whites, lost to Tennessee last week in the women's championship game.

The April 4 “Imus in the Morning” program, simulcast on MSNBC, contained this exchange:

DON IMUS: So, I watched the basketball game last night between – a little bit of Rutgers and Tennessee, the women's final.

SID ROSENBERG [Fired Imus sports announcer filling in for sportscaster Chris Carlin] : Yeah, Tennessee won last night – seventh championship for [Tennessee coach] Pat Summitt, I-Man. They beat Rutgers by 13 points.

IMUS: That's some rough girls from Rutgers. Man, they got tattoos and –

BERNARD MCGUIRK [The program's executive producer] : Some hard-core hos.

IMUS: That's some nappy-headed hos there. I'm gonna tell you that now, man, that's some – woo. And the girls from Tennessee, they all look cute, you know, so, like – kinda like – I don't know.

MCGUIRK: A Spike Lee thing.

IMUS: Yeah.

MCGUIRK: The Jigaboos vs. the Wannabes – that movie that he had.

IMUS: Yeah, it was a tough –

CHARLES MCCORD [co-host]: Do The Right Thing.

MCGUIRK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

IMUS: I don't know if I'd have wanted to beat Rutgers or not, but they did, right?

ROSENBERG: It was a tough watch. The more I look at Rutgers, they look exactly like the Toronto Raptors.

IMUS: Well, I guess, yeah.

LOU RUFFINO [engineer]: Only tougher.

MCGUIRK: The [Memphis] Grizzlies

would be more appropriate.

Initially, Imus refused to apologize for the comments, saying people should relax and not worry about “some idiot comment meant to be amusing.” On April 6, the idiot finally apologized for “an insensitive and ill-conceived remark.”

McCord, the show's co-host, was evidently referring to Spike Lee's 1988 film, “School Daze,” not “Do the Right Thing.” In “School Daze,” there was a rivalry between the dark-skinned “Jigaboos” and the light-skinned “Wannabees.”

Rosenberg has been “fired” a couple of times from the Imus program, but keeps making guest appearances. The monitoring group, Media Matters for America (www.mediamatters.org), observed:

“Rosenberg's comparison of the Rutgers women's basketball team to the Raptors recalled comments he made in June 2001 about Venus and Serena Williams, two African-American female professional tennis players. According to a November 20, 2001, Newsday article, Rosenberg said on the air: “One time, a friend, he says to me, ‘Listen, one of these days you're gonna see Venus and Serena Williams in Playboy.’ I said, ‘You've got a better shot at National Geographic.’”

Imus' belated apology notwithstanding, his program is a cesspool for racist and sexist remarks. Imus once referred to PBS anchor Gwen Ifill as “a cleaning lady” and McGuirk referred to Barack Obama as “this young colored fellah.”

According to mediamatters.org, “On the March 6 edition of MSNBC's Imus in the Morning, executive producer Bernard McGuirk said that Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) was ‘trying to sound black in front of a black audience’ when she gave a speech on March 4 in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the 1965 ‘Bloody Sunday’ civil rights march. McGuirk added that Clinton ‘will have cornrows and gold teeth before this fight with [Sen. Barack] Obama [D-IL] is over.’ Earlier in the program, in reference to Clinton's speech, McGuirk had said, ‘Bitch is gonna be wearing cornrows.’ McGuirk also said that Clinton will be ‘giving Crips signs during speeches.’ The Crips are a Los Angeles-based street gang.

“Later, host Don Imus brought up McGuirk's prior impersonations of African-American poet Maya Angelou asking, “[W]ho was that woman you used to do, the poet? ... We used to get in all that trouble every time you'd do her.” As McGuirk launched into the impersonation, Imus said, ‘I don't need

Continued on page 14.

COMMENTARY

MySpace is everyone's space: That's the problem



Eddie Francis
Data Columnist

by Eddie Francis

Social networking web sites are nothing new. Many belong to sites such as Black Planet, Classmates, Reunion and countless others. The explosion of MySpace, however, has taken some adults' anxiety to a new high. Its presence in teens' and young adults' lives is solid as a rock. Ask any teen in any community about MySpace and he or she is likely to have a page on the site.

For the record, MySpace is not the only social networking web site that is accessible to teens. The popular web site, Wikipedia, lists a wealth of social networking sites including one called Amiworthit.com for "mutually good looking students." Even though most of these sites are designed for adult networking, many have open registration. MySpace has the lion's share of users at well over 162 million. That number may be music to the MySpace managers' ears but not always to its users.

"Check here if you have a personal web page."

Nowadays colleges and employers are using social networking sites as recruitment tools. Personal web pages have become a part of college admissions criteria with some students getting everything from rejected by certain colleges to getting their scholarships taken away. Leonard Williams, the director of the University of New Orleans' Office of Career Development, sees students compromise their career opportunities frequently. He says that employers have been "quite amused and a little frightened at the sort of information (students) have posted."

"It's one thing for a celebrity or someone in the public eye to have an unflattering and quite honestly revealing photo show up on the Internet but it is another for a college graduate to feel comfortable in that level of 'nude-oriety,'" he says. Williams says that personal web pages provide a look into students' character and "free time" choices. He does not feel that those activities should not influence an employer's decision to hire but they subconsciously affect the employer's decision.

African-Americans have always taken a certain amount of pride in using a better moral compass in how we portray ourselves

in public. Unfortunately African-American youth have joined the social networking site craze with few personal limitations. Williams says, "Actually the black students have been just as guilty of shameless posting as other students. We live in an age where computers, cell phones with cameras and Internet access are not hard to come by." In Williams' case, he has a double dose of social networking sites. Facebook, which boasts approximately 16 million users, is popular primarily among college students but also has its share of high school students.

The problem is that a teen or a young adult having an objectionable personal web page could have long-term effects. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) published an article ("The Issues Surrounding College Recruiting and Social Networking Web Site", 6/22/06) about the gamble that students take when their personal web pages contain questionable content. The article tells the story of an internship candidate who has a page on Facebook.

Although the student had posted his page at the age of 18, it came back to haunt him two years later. Realizing that a potential employer would object to some of the content of his page, the student wisely limited access to his page to his friends. However when he went in for his internship interview, the interviewer asked specific questions about the content of his page. To his surprise the interviewer gained access to his profile because the organization for which he was interviewing was a state agency. The recruiters were able to access his page under the Patriot Act even though it was private.

Discretion in cyberspace

What teens and young adults do not realize is that their pages are public domain whether they like it or not. MySpace insists that it will "always keep your personal information private and confidential." At the same time the site warns that "your profile and MySpace forums are public spaces" under its safety tips. It is up to the user, most often a young and impressionable person, to recognize the risk factor. Young users, as it turns out, have problems separating their intentions from the availability of their pages.

Cincinnati-based Making It Count Programs, a division of Monster Worldwide, has included a warning about personal pages on social networking sites in two of their in-school presentations. "Making Your College Search Count" for juniors and "Making College and Career Count" for seniors both state, "If you wouldn't put it on your resume, don't put it on your personal web page. The senior presentation even goes so far as to stage an interview exercise where the winning candidate is picked because the runner-up has an objectionable personal web page.

This is where adults can be most useful. Kimberly Byas-Dilosa is the executive director of the YOUTHAnasia Foundation, and deals with teens on a consistent basis. Dilosa takes an immense amount of pride in her work as a youth advocate and she also takes pride in serving as a big sister to her young organizational associates. In helping her youth develop she has taken on the task of monitoring her kids' personal web pages.

"Let them know that they are representing (YOUTHAnasia)," says Dilosa. Not only does she monitor her kids' pages to make sure that they have respectable pictures and writing but she even insists that they upload the clean versions of their favorite songs. If she hears or sees something she does not like, she immediately contacts the user to let him/her know that Big Sister is watching. Big Sister, by the way, has her own personal web page.

Dilosa has such a good rapport with her kids that they respect her wishes. When asked about her younger brothers and sisters' misrepresenting themselves on their pages she shoots back, "Oh, they know better than that! Some of the boys try to say that they're older than they are but I make them change that right away." Dilosa's weapon is that she posts messages to her kids for the world to see.

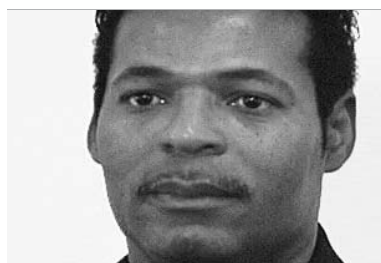
The news is not all bad about kids' behavior on social networking sites. One of Dilosa's YOUTHAnasia members uses her page as a resume, of sorts. Her page contains a headshot, a list of activities that she participates in and other resume-worthy elements. "She has an age-appropriate page," says Dilosa. "I would like for employers to see accomplishments (on kids' pages)."

Some students even use social networking sites to prospect their peers. According to Delta Sky magazine ("Oops! Did I Really Do THAT?", 3/07) some college housing offices across the nation found out that students were checking out their soon-to-be roommates' personal web pages. In some cases the students asked to switch rooms. In another case an athlete backed out of her commitment to a Big 10 Conference school when she saw her future teammates' pages on Facebook.

Still, young people's use of social networking is clearly a cause for concern. Williams says that he has spoken to some of his UNO students about their pages. The response has not been that good. He says that students stand by their personal web pages in an effort to say "let me be me", but they soon learn when they are faced with the reality of the job recruitment process. Says Williams, "They only think that the 'man is trying to hold' them down."

IN THE SPIRIT

The Resurrection of Christ pt. 2



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

In one of my previous article, I talked about the resurrection of Christ and what it meant to those who practice the Christian Faith. However, to those who have been born again it simply means to have a new spiritual birth in Jesus Christ. The Resurrection of Christ and the spiritual new birth are related to one another. In the Bible, one of God's greatest preachers and ministers talks about the spiritual new birth.

In the second book of Corinthians chapter 5 Verse 17, Paul speaks to the believers in Christ at Corinth, and he says to them, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature or creation or person." Then he talks about the old man or the old sinful nature that we all had. He also goes on to say, "Because of the death burial and resurrection of Christ, we accept him as our savior and God, we have a new nature, a new mind, a new heart, and a new way of life in him." And in these troubled times we must understand and accept Christ and acknowledge that the Resurrection of Christ was surely a supernatural event that took place so that we could have eternal life.

God's love is truly ever present, redemptive and unconditional for instance when Adam disobeyed God in the book of Genesis Chapter 2 Verse 17, he brought spiritual and physical death to the world, but God loved everyone of us so much that he demonstrated his love by sending his son Jesus Christ to die on the cross so that we could be restored back to him. His resurrection demonstrated the power and authority that the father gave him. His death by crucifixion was one of the cruelest deaths that anyone could imagine.

The old Romans used the form of capital punishment by death for slaves and the lowest

criminals. The person was often whipped first, like in Christ's case. Next, he was tied to a nailed to a cross and left to die. Christ's enemies, which were some of the rebellious leaders and the Roman Government, felt threatened by change. They were convinced that the death of Christ would stop his movement. However, it was ordained by God that Christ would defeat his enemies, and Satan, and that mankind would be delivered by his death and resurrection.

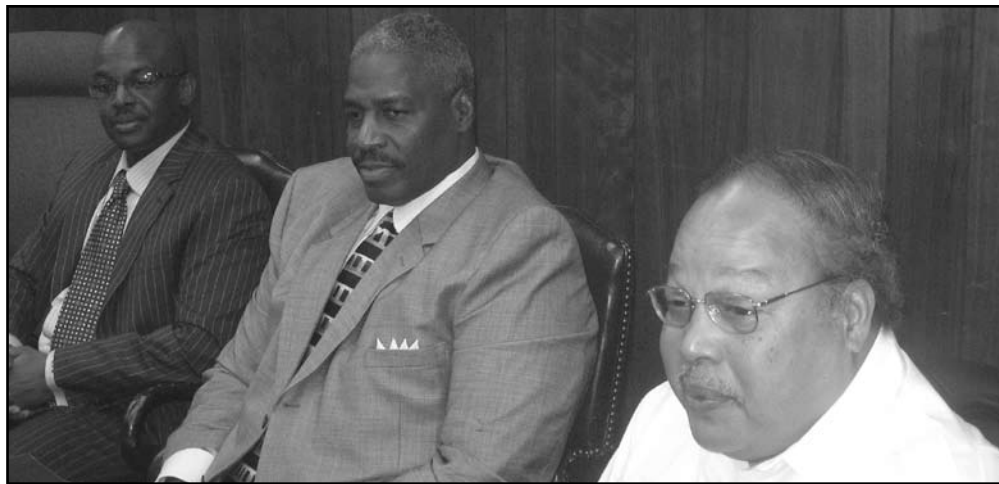
Christ looked like he was defeated at Calvary, to those that hated him, but they were all dead wrong. Even those who loved him turned their backs on him except a faithful few. His love for all mankind allowed him to accept death with open arms. These were the words that Christ spoke before he died; "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they do." To those followers who knew him, his resurrection brought understanding to them, as it relates to the Old Testament scriptures about coming into the world (Luke 24:25).

Today God and man are back together again. People of God, we should thank God that his son rose from death and the grave. We the believers in him can also rise from any dead situation that is trying to keep us bound. It doesn't matter what it is. It may be a dead marriage, a dead end job, dysfunctional families, or dead relationships. It may even be sickness and diseases, poverty or face any situation that comes your way, remember if you accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior you will have the strength to overcome any situation. And finally I ask you, take the time out to watch the sun go down in the evenings. Does that same sun come up again in the morning? Yes. I believe Christ did rise, so that we can all live a happy and more abundant life. Have a Happy Easter.

Dr. Aaron E. Harold is the pastor of New Millennium Breakthrough Ministries. To contact him with your comments or suggested topics he can be reached at rharold1@cox.net or (504) 813-5767

NEWS

N.O. Sanitation Goes High Tech with Richard's Disposal and Metro Disposal



L to R, G. Howard "Glenn" Woods, Brown Marks and Alvin Richards, Jr. are the owners of Richard's Disposal and Metro Disposal, two African-American owned sanitation companies who have both serviced the Greater New Orleans Area for years.

By Renetta Burrell Perry
Photos by Glenn Jones

N.O. Sanitation Goes High Tech with Richard's Disposal and Metro Disposal

Garbage collection in New Orleans Post Katrina has gone high tech in the wake of an innovative and groundbreaking joint venture between Richard's Disposal and Metro Disposal, two African-American owned sanitation companies who have both serviced the Greater New Orleans Area for years. After Katrina, the companies bided independently and were awarded contracts to service the crippled metropolitan area - Metro Disposal, North of I-10 and Richard's Disposal, South of I-10. Though both companies were tremendously affected by the hurricane, they both have hit the ground running and the results have been unprecedented in a city that measures successful events in pounds of trash.

After Katrina, the nature of the trash business inevitably needed to change. The companies saw this as a challenge, but these minority business overcame obstacles that may have landed other businesses in the can. G. Howard Woods of Metro Disposal, Inc. says bonding issues as well as capital were challenges for his company. "The waste business is so capital intensive. After you meet the bonding specifications, the capital output is just tremendous. The cost of the trucks, the cost of the containers, the payroll for the amount of employees it takes to run the business. It's tremendous," he says adding that

the 3rd generation company was started in the early 1970s with private contracts with restaurants and bars.

For Alvin Richard, Jr., owner of Richard's Disposal, Inc., the reality of facing a hurricane damaged business as well as a hurricane damaged home, coupled with the idea of resurrecting his business operations was a daunting task to put it lightly. Pre-Katrina, Richard's, along with Waste Management jointly collected waste in the city, but after the storm, Waste Management bailed out leaving Richard's and Metro the opportunity to bid for the contracts. As did Woods, Richard faced bonding issues. "I had to exercise my option either to stay in business doing municipalities or just do commercial type work. And one of the obstacles that we were looking at was can I get financing to support the amount of trucks that we needed. The major obstacle with any minority company is bonding. And that was still a major issue all the way through until we bid on the contract," says Richard adding that another major obstacle for his business and for Metro Disposal is perception. "Obstacles that we still face is the perception that we are minority companies, but what the people don't realize is that Richard's Disposal has been collecting garbage for over 29 years. But this is how the people perceive us to be because we're not a household name, and this is where the problem exists with the public how they perceive the two African-American companies that do the business and we both have been doing this for so many

years that this is like second nature. The areas are better served than they've ever been. We take much pride in what we do and we are both hands-on people who go out and handle our daily business. There are no corporate entities or conglomerates that are outside the city of New Orleans. All of our workers and players are here in the City of New Orleans.

High-Tech in N.O.

In order to compete with sanitation companies nationwide as well as internationally, change has come in the way trash is collected on the streets of New Orleans. Thus, the gradual and effective transition from old trash cans to standardized garbage collection via state-of-the-art collection carts that are assured to promote a cleaner, healthier and more uniformed environment for citizens of New Orleans. Though somewhat resistant to change, citizens are enjoying the new carts which boast the capacity to hold 250 pounds of household garbage and are issued free of charge. The carts are also armed with bar code which can be retrieved by the vendor using a sophisticated tracking system. All of this in the name of bettering the City of New Orleans.

Richard's and Metro encourage all residents who have not yet received their new carts to call or email them for more information. Richard's Disposal Customer Service Center: 504-241-2142 or www.richardsdisposal.com and Metro Disposal Customer Service Center: 504-520-8331 or www.metrodisposal.com

NEWS

Congressman John Conyers in New Orleans for Katrina Hearings

House Judiciary Subcommittee to Investigate Katrina's Impact on New Orleans Criminal Justice System

(New Orleans, LA)- The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security will hold a field hearing on Tuesday, April 10, 2007 in New Orleans titled, "Katrina's Impact on Crime and the Criminal Justice System in New Orleans." The hearing will be held at 10:00 am at Dillard University's Lawless Memorial Chapel, 2601

Gentilly Boulevard. Subcommittee Chairman Robert "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) hopes to find policy solutions for the problems the city's criminal justice system has faced.

"The flooding after Hurricane Katrina had a devastating impact on all aspects of life in New Orleans, including its criminal justice operations," said Chairman

Scott. "The Subcommittee will determine whether additional federal assistance is needed to address the problems caused by the devastation."

Panel I: Mayor C. Ray Nagin; Honorable Oliver Thomas, City Council President; Rep. William Jefferson (D-LA); Rep. Bobby Jindal (D-LA); and Dr. Marvalene Hughes,

President, Dillard University.

Panel II: Orleans Parish District Attorney Eddie Jordan; New Orleans Police Superintendent Warren Riley; and Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff Marlin Gusman.

Panel III: Professor Peter Scharf, University of New Orleans; Dr. Howard Osofsky, psychiatrist; and Juvenile Court Judge Ernestine Gray.

Panel IV: U.S. Attorney Jim Letten and representatives from the local Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and US Marshal Service (USMS) offices.

Shaquanda Cotton, Continued from page 7.

Smiley said Shaquanda's behavior record is academic; the punishment still didn't meet the crime.

"This girl was assaulted and they would not even allow the mother to press charges against the school official that assaulted her," he said. "I don't give a damn what they found on her school record. She was 14, I bet she wasn't badder than me. You ought to see my school record. I was crazy as hell."

School board trustee Ron Price expressed disappointment at the Black leadership in North Texas.

"We come up with too many lame excuses as a race to fight for justice until we're in trouble," Price said. "Then we have the audacity - but don't have the intestinal fortitude - to stand up for our right as a people."

Casey Thomas, president of the Dallas NAACP branch, called in on Smiley's show stating that the state NAACP office has been on the case.

"The NAACP on the state level has been working this case for over a year. I don't know how many people were aware of that information or not," Thomas said. "Back in March 2006, when the verdict was first given, then the sentence, the NAACP began working on this case."

Cherry, however said the representation for the Paris branch took an opposite position.

"Shaquanda sat in prison for over a year. We went down to the local NAACP, Creola asked for assistance and she was denied that," Cherry said. "It was only when it was time for Shaquanda to get out, then they put an article in the local paper saying that they wanted her released. You don't help until it's all over."

"To me, the NAACP should work as a well-oiled machine and all should work together. You can't have the local NAACP fighting against her then the Texas NAACP helping her. It doesn't make any sense."

Thomas said he couldn't speak for the Paris officers, but: "I stand behind any movement of justice irregardless of how anybody else feels about it, if the facts are there."


Cherry stated denial of racist practices in the northeast Texas city of 26,000 by many of the 5,000 Blacks, as one obstacle for change in the city.

It's like living in a different time period, Cherry said. "Until we stand up and stand together, it's not going to get any better. Black people need to stop being afraid. Those few Black people who say there is no racism, if they feel there's none, then God bless them. But they should not try to stop the others who do have issues and are speaking out."

Bobbie Edmonds is part of a team of attorneys that will look into the racial climate in Paris.

"My contribution would be to make sure that there were violations to civil rights, violations of school district policies, to see if there needs to be any monitoring of the disciplinary tactics that were used," Edmonds said.


"There needs to be a move to make our school board members and elected officials accountable to the safety of our school and the children in the school system. The tax dollars that pay for the in-house counsels of the school district, it's our tax dollars that help pay for it."










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NEWS

Legendary Coach Eddie Robinson Memorialized at State Capitol

Brett Martel

GRAMBLING, La. – It was the kind of gathering of former NFL stars that might draw a crowd in any other small town. Here, they were part of the crowd, just a handful of men among thousands



Legendary Coach Eddie Robinson

of people honoring the late coaching legend Eddie Robinson.

"He's as great a person, or mentor or coach as America has ever had," said James Harris, the former Grambling State University quarterback who became one of the first black quarterbacks in the NFL when he joined O.J. Simpson in the Buffalo Bills' backfield. "There are so many things to be thankful for and proud of that you just had an opportunity in life to be touched by such an outstanding person."

Robinson's burial on Wednesday was to mark the end of three days of events to honor the longtime Grambling coach, who died last week at age 88. On Monday, he joined only a handful of other figures in Louisiana history, including political titan Huey Long, who have lain in repose inside the state Capitol in Baton Rouge.

On Tuesday night, cars filled a church parking lot and more lined Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue as an overflow crowd crammed into a Baptist church for Robinson's wake.

Robinson's wife, Doris, who had attended a memorial service for her late husband in the Capitol a day earlier, was not at the wake.

Friends and family said she was not feeling well but still planned to attend the funeral on Wednesday.

Still, the wake was so crowded that former NFL defensive back Everson Walls, who won a Super Bowl with the New York Giants, spent part of the service standing in the aisle of the church balcony.

Nearby sat Doug Williams, the former NFL quarterback who became the Super Bowl MVP with the Washington Redskins in 1988.

After the service, Harris chatted with Hall of Fame defensive back Willie Brown, who was famous for his 75-yard touchdown return of a Fran Tarkenton pass in the Oakland Raiders' Super Bowl victory over the Minnesota Vikings in 1977. Hall of Fame receiver Charlie Joiner was expected to attend the burial on Wednesday, Harris said. They all played at one time or another for the man so many here call "Coach Rob."

"He established a tradition. He put Grambling on the map. He touched football on every level. But even more important, he touched the lives of so many other Americans," Harris said after the service. "Everybody here at Grambling, when you travel



Former players carried Coach Eddie Robinson casket up the steps of the Louisiana State Capitol.

around the country, there's such a strong camaraderie that was kind of built through the work of coach. He's a rare, rare person."

Grambling basketball coach and former NBA player Larry Wright, speaking at the wake, drew applause from the crowd when he called Robinson "larger than life" and "the greatest

Gramblingite of all-time."

Robinson had no paid assistants when he took what would be his first and only college coaching job in 1941. He went on to coach for 57 seasons, winning 408 games and sending more than 200 players from the small school in rural north Louisiana to the NFL.

Former players have remembered Robinson as a man who not only taught them hard work and perseverance on the football field, but also stressed education, humility, generosity, and loyalty. Longtime residents of this town say Robinson never

Imus, Continued from page 5.

her every day, raising her up with all that she's done for the world to see. She's been on TV every day. Janet Jackson, all that happened was one of her breasts came out. And they tried to crucify her."

The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) has also called for his firing.

NABJ President Bryan Monroe, who joined Sharpton on the radio show with Imus, has said the suspension was "a good first step", but not enough.

"Now it is time for them to finish the job and let him go. NABJ remains outraged after the racially inflammatory insults made by radio personality Don Imus," says a statement on the organizations website.

Angela Burt-Murray, editor-in-chief of ESSENCE magazine has called for a tougher reprimand of Imus.

"Disparaging comments about African-American women are unacceptable," says Burt-Murray. "MSNBC and WFAN must take a stronger stance. It needs to be made clear that this type of behavior is offensive and will not be tolerated without severe consequences."

Black women should be outraged, says San Francisco psychologist Julia Hare, co-founder of the Black Think Tank.

"Until the Black woman says that we are organized and we outnumber Black men. And when we find that anyone in media or in high position are calling us names - because we notice that you don't call your blond mothers this or your sisters or your daughter this - then we must move to remove you from that particular position."

Hare says the fact that Imus might have picked up the term from rappers is no excuse. "He is truly just an old guard racist."

seemed too busy or self-important to chat with them. Athletes who played sports other than football at Grambling still cited Robinson as a major influence in their lives.

"I would go to football practice almost every day just to hear something legendary from coach Rob," Wright recalled. "You had to get some of his touch. He dealt with everybody. Every time he'd see you, it was: 'Hey, Cat, how you doing?' And you knew that it was genuine. They don't come no better than coach Robinson."

Addressing the crowd, Republican state Sen. Bob

Kostelka wondered aloud what kind of salary Robinson might have had a chance to earn were he in his prime in this day of seven-figure salaries for top college coaches.

"He didn't move from university to university. He didn't live in a palace. He lived in the same sleepy little town and produced All-Americans and Hall-of-Famers," Kostelka said. "He gained something more than what you can buy with money. He gained immortality ... and there is only one coach Rob."

NAACP Chairman Julian Bond says because of Imus' past offensive statements, this time is inexcusable.

"As long as an audience is attracted to his bigotry and politicians and pundits tolerate his racism and chauvinism to promote themselves, Don Imus will continue to be a serial apologist for prejudice. It is past time his employers took him off the air," Bond said in a statement.

The recent outrage over Imus' comments harkens to C. DeLores Tucker, the late chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women, Inc., who was a strong critic of hip-hop culture for more than a decade, citing its denigration of Black women and its negative influence on youth.

"The glorification of pornography, wanton disregard for civil authority, misogynistic disrespect for women and a penchant for violence are the unintended impact of hip-hop culture on today's youth," she told JET. "I say unintended, because hip hop ... was intended to celebrate the revival of the age-old rhymed recitations of life's problems and aspirations set to music."

Sharpton says this is an opportunity to deal with it all.

"The FCC has got to put in a standard and enforce it across the board. And I think that our community has got to take a real appraisal of what we've aloud to happen. Here you have some young ladies who did the right thing. They're in school, they're excelling in athletics. And then to be called a 'ho, largely because some elements in the music industry allowed that to happen. And I'm not going to sit by and allow the rap industry or Imus sit around and denigrate our

young women," Sharpton says. "I've got two young daughters," says Sharpton. "And even though we've got some blame to bear. I'm certainly not going to sit there and act like Imus doesn't have enough sense to know better. He wouldn't do that to any other community no matter what they did."

Curry, Continued from page 10.

any more columns. Come on.' But Imus did not stop McGuirk, who delivered his impression in verse:

McGUIRK: Whitey plucked you from the jungle for too many years

Took away your pride, your dignity, and your spears...

With freedom came new woes
Into whitey's world you was rudely cast

So wake up now and go to work?

You can kiss my big black [butt]"

It's time to wake up and insist that MSNBC, which claims to be a reputable television network, and CBS, the program's distributor, remove such raving idiots from the airwaves. If company officials refuse, we should refuse to watch their network or support their sponsors. You can e-mail MSNBC at viewerservices@msnbc.com or write them at: MSNBC TV, One MSNBC Plaza, Secaucus, N.J. 07094. Telephone 201/583-5000.

By allowing Imus to pollute the airwaves, MSNBC and CBS Radio are the entities acting like ho's.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach.

DATA ZONE

Continued from page 8.

With many rap artists from New Orleans gaining national acclaim, there are certain stereotyped images of what artists from the Crescent City are supposed to be, but MYSELF feels there are many different types of hip-hop artists that have always existed in New Orleans and have represented the different genres and faces of hip-hop. Regarding his own music he says there is an eternal and internal connection to New Orleans that is integral in his music although he now resides in New York City. "New Orleans is me, its how I talk, its how I walk it's a part of me, so obviously it's going to transcend into my music." As he explains his present project, 'Protest In Disguise' he says, "On this project I am in-depth about how I talk about different neighborhoods. And musically I incorporate some of the funk and jazz elements that the city is known for but it also has a rock edge to it mixed with hip-hop." "I feel New Orleans have contributed a lot to the world in terms of music and I am part of the tradition and this album is my contribution to that legacy."

As to the question of what exactly is the New Orleans hip-hop sound he says, "I think New Orleans hip-hop is misunderstood, I think a lot of people think it all started with Master P and the Cash Money Millionaires, but that's not necessarily true and I want to show another face of New Orleans Hip-Hop and although I may not use some of the slang that New Orleans is known for you feel the spirit and it has an energy that jumps out and is unique because of my New Orleans experience and that's evident in a lot of the music coming from here because there is no other city in the United States like it."

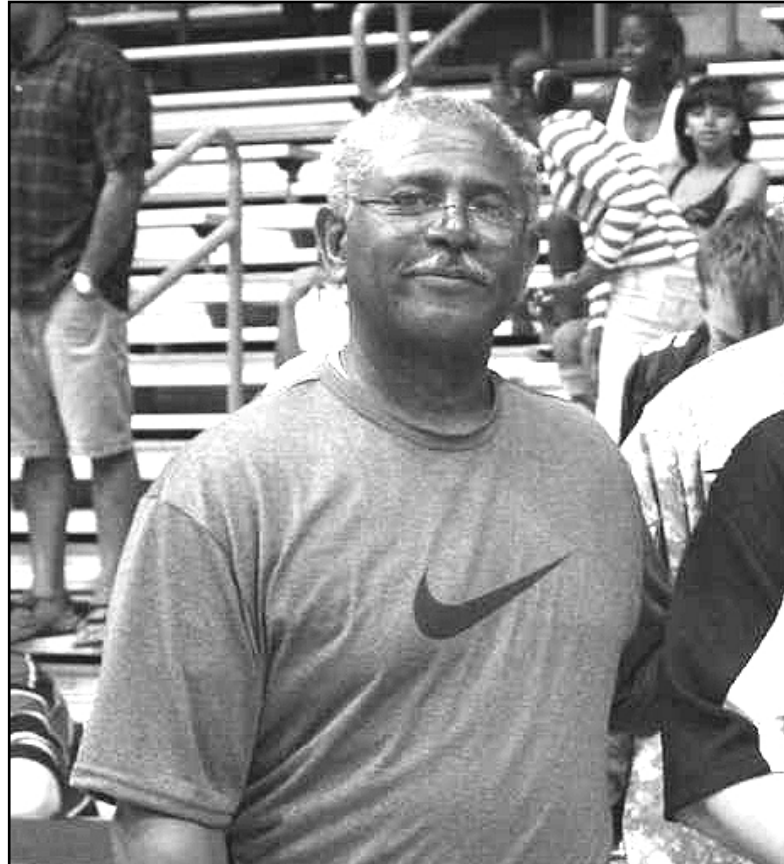
Although he has lived in the Big Apple for several years his roots are firmly planted in the soil of the Big Easy, and when Hurricane Katrina decimated much of the city he was worried for the welfare of his family and friends, "My family was affected by the storm, my mother's house caught fire and burned down, my family experienced the whole debacle of the Superdome and was forced to live in Texas for about a year, and they just recently moved back to Louisiana." On the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina he re-entered the city and he once knew seemed distant and unfamiliar as his home was no more, the city where he honed his talent was no more. While in New Orleans he took part in a documentary film focusing on art and politics entitled 'Pocket Change' which also features Academy Award Winning director and screenwriter Oliver Stone. During this time of reflection on his life and the purpose of his art he also filmed the video for his breakout double-sided digital single 'God Is So Funky/Where We Goin'. While witnessing the wreckage of New Orleans he says of his song and its prophetic message, "Where We're Goin is a song that shadowed what was going on, not just where we're going as a people, but where we're going after the destruction of the city, and now that this disaster has affected so many people and the question is what do we do, and because its affected so many people I know this song has taken on a greater significance to me."

No stranger to being in front of the camera he has also delved into acting; where he was recently cast in an upcoming film starring Busta Rhymes, Sticky Fingaz and Academy Award Nominee Tom Berenger, called 'Order of Redemption.' MYSELF recounts how this came about, "The producer of the film heard some of my music and she fell in love with it and thought that it would be great not only to have my music incorporated in the film, but also to have me in the film." As he speaks pondering his future in the entertainment industry he says, "I feel that the direction I want to go in is definitely more multimedia, I have been in front the camera, and recently I was part of an ad campaign with MTV Jams. And I am working on developing a fashion line called Couture."

In an industry where artists come and go, and where the fame game is an illusive, illusion, deceiving some to believe popularity equals talent. MYSELF is an artist that through perseverance has proven that making music from his soul in an uncompromising way can bear fruit, as he has positioned himself and is ready to present another face of New Orleans hip-hop to the world, and perhaps charting and changing the course of a genre that has lost its soul as a musical messiah of the new millennium.

SPORTS

Ron Gearing up to Revise Orleans Parish Athletic Department



Ron Gearing

By Ty Green
Photos by Kevin Blakes

It's been nearly two years since the Orleans Parish Schools Athletic Department ran a normal course. Running at normal capacity has been virtually a hard course to run without facing obstacles its path. For starters, you need student athletes and the facilities that come along with it to make for a smooth transition. Just like the many displaced students in wake of Hurricane Katrina, the department is taking on the challenge with a new attitude along with a renewed leader. Ron Gearing has returned at the helm and faced with the task of restoring the department's quality and leadership needed for the student athletes. Gearing has been very active in making sure

his department fills the needs of the student athletes by touching basics with various organizations and corporate leaders to see the necessities of the schools even before they hit the field or court.

But before you can move forward you have to back up and realize, you must have the athletes in place and the facilities adequate and safe enough for them to play in and to play on. The 2006-2007 basketball seasons saw only four schools have league play in Orleans Parish and only one gym to play in. Meanwhile, OP didn't have a lot of teams to field a complete football season as well. One of Gearing's major events, is the annual Orleans versus Jefferson Parish All-Star Basketball Extravaganza, featuring some of the top quality athletes from both Parishes

competing for bragging rights.

This season, Gearing turned it up a notch soliciting a major sponsor in the U.S. Army and turned to long time friend and mentor Walter Tillman, the new Athletic Director for the Recovery School District. The two worked in perfect harmony bring together Charter, Independent, Recovery, even Acadian Parish district Schools into play for an All-Star match-up featuring a host of talented boys and girls who all have potential to exceed at major college level.

"This has been a long time dream of mind to expand and invite those schools outside the parishes, said Gearing. The talent is out there and it's our duty to offer them the opportunity to play as an All-Star." The expansion is not expected to stop on the basketball court, as Gearing and Tillman are planning events in Track and field that should bring diversity among both departments in the middle of April. While Tillman, who actually had Gearing as a student while at Dillard University continues teach him even today, both are teaching others the lesson of providing and leading the way for the student athletes.

"Trying to get the kids support and their participation in the various activities as they compete has been a priority for all of us in the Athletic Department, said Tillman. Katrina gave us no other option but to expand."

Gearing is expected to shift into a higher gear heading into next season, as more Orleans Parish Schools are expected to re-open and additional teams will field to the vacant district spots. At the rate of speed he's going, it's not likely he will stop until the kids have what it takes to bring his department back in stride again!

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